



Graduate Women
International (GWI)

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Graduate Women International (GWI) promotes the protection of culture, knowledge and languages of the world's Indigenous people through education

Geneva, Switzerland, 9 August 2018 - On 13 September 2007, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, reaching the recognition of the injustices against to native people and obtaining the support for the respect of their culture and identity.

Data indicates that an estimated 370 million Indigenous people in the world, live across 90 countries, yet account for less than 5 percent of the world's population and are among 15 percent of the poorest. Indigenous people speak the majority of the world's estimated 7,000 languages and represent 5,000 different cultures. Native people have rich, valuable and enchanting cultures and way of relating with the land. Having different social and cultural characteristics from the dominant societies surrounding them, Indigenous people have often fought to maintain their own meaningful traditions along with their politic system. However, collectively, native people from all around the world face the same complications concerning the protection of their rights as distinct people. They have fought for the realisation of the acceptance of their identities, the right to traditional territories and natural resources and acknowledgement of their Indigenous knowledge for years. However, their rights have been violated throughout history.

Indigenous peoples today, are among the most disadvantaged, poorly schooled and vulnerable groups of people in the world. The international community now recognises that special measures are required to protect their rights, maintain their distinct cultures and exercise the right to education. "GWI calls on all countries to protect and support Indigenous people. GWI strongly believes that Indigenous knowledge, particularly the knowledge of Indigenous women, is invaluable to the protection of the earth and its natural resources and biodiversity and that if we are to create sustainable societies we must respect Indigenous cultures and the rights of all Indigenous people", says Geeta Desai, GWI President.

Concerningly, Indigenous girls are among the first to be left out of an education often due inharmonious learning methods or language spoken in the classroom; they are more vulnerable due to treatment within the family and the community. However, studies conducted by Inmujeres, the Mexican federal institution that contributes to the advancement of gender equity in Mexican society, are showing that (Indigenous) girls with the opportunity to attend secondary education show increased productivity and income, and more empowerment and governance over their lives. GWI commends such efforts yet aims for immense change and increased opportunities for Indigenous girls worldwide.

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 54 countries. Founded in 1919, GWI is the leading girls' and women's global organisation advocating for women's rights, equality and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels. GWI is in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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